agencies to make decisions about land. Conveyancers are relied upon to locate, interpret and organise this information for buyers and sellers of land. If government organised land information and took responsibility for its accuracy, a dramatic change in conveyancing practice would occur.

The author argues for the elimination of paper based enquiries. There should be no need to make separate applications on different forms at different fees for certificates of different quality and legal effect.

The core of a land information system is computer title registration. The author argues that the system should be reworked so that paper is eliminated as far as possible, so that not even duplicate titles are issued. The argument that this may increase the possiblity of fraud is countered.

Further, the author suggests that a land title system need not computerise titles, and that information in the title can be contained as a layer of data about private owners and their interests on a computerised parcel map. This offers an easy way of making land information work at two levels: providing the information about the parcel and about the region in which the parcel is situated.

As this type of title will, it is claimed, greatly decrease the drudgery of conveyancing, the lawyer will be freed up to use more professional skills in advising clients in buying and selling land – such as how the title should be acquired (by company or individual), how to finance the transaction for best taxation advantage, and to adapt the transaction to the needs of the particular client. These are the skills that the buying and selling public need, the author argues.

• *Victorian Law Reform Commission*

THE COMPUTER AS A CONVEYANCER: THE SHADOW BETWEEN THE IDEA & THE REALITY

• *by Murray R McCutcheon*

In his paper on the computer as a conveyancer, Murray McCutcheon briefly examines the possibilities of integrated computer systems for all aspects of legal work.

In the second part of his paper, he examines how computerised conveyancing systems should work. He predicts that in three to five years "paperless" conveyances will be standard.

The required steps involved are:

- *Integrated Software*: The conveyancing software which is currently available is of a stand alone variety. It must be integrated with the firm's accounting, library and data base software and the information kept in the lawyer's internal as well as external data bases. It should also be integrated with telephone and facsimile facilities.
- *On receipt of instructions*: The

program should automatically make title search enquiries, and rating and land information data base enquiries, automatically debit the client's account and bill when the level reaches a certain level.

- *Automatic communications:* Throughout the file the program should be able to generate the letters advising on the progress, requisitions and other routine matters.

- *Automatic calculations:* The program should be able to automatically calculate the necessary adjustments, balance purchase price, and settlement figures.

- *Settlement appointments:* The computer programe should arrange settlement times for all parties when all parties have a similar system running which is openly accessible.

- *Settlements:* Presumably as an alternative to the above requirement, there should be a purely electronic settlement involving electronic funds transfer, payment of stamp duty, and alterations to the Titles Office data base.

- *Notification:* On confirmation of settlement either the Titles Office or the solicitor's programe will automatically update the rating authorities records, notify the purchaser and generate a fee invoice, and update the firm's records.

It must be noted that the implications of such an integrated program for the future role of lawyers is said to be limited to the standard, the routine and the domestic type of conveyancing practices, where the new technology would allow the lawyer to compete with the alternative services now on offer.

• *Partner in the Melbourne firm of Darvall McCutcheon*

COMPUTER EVIDENCE

• *by Douglas Meagher QC*

This paper dealt in part with the possibilities of litigation arising out of the use of expert systems. Much of his analysis was based on the MYCIN programme.

MYCIN is a computer program designed to provide advice comparable to that of a specialist, to aid doctors in the diagnosis and treatment of meningitis and bacteraemia infections. These diseases develop during hospitalisation, require swift action, and may be fatal. MYCIN has been running in the United States for some twenty years. It has an error rate of about 37%, which is, however, a better average than specialists in the field.

The author predicted that it is only a matter of time before this system, or like systems, come before a court through:

- a claim in negligence through a doctor's failure to use the program and correctly diagnose the disease;

- a claim in negligence where the program *was* used and a failure to diagnose or correctly prescribe occurred (sue doctor, who joins supplier of program, who